



NEW NATIONAL POLL FINDS VOTERS WANT CONGRESS TO FIX TROUBLED HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Health care is an issue that ranks high for voters both in terms of importance to them personally *and* as a top priority for Congress and the President to address. When asked to rank it in importance against other current issues, voters place it on par or above the situation in Iraq and combating terrorism.

One-third of voters say the current health care system is not meeting their needs, or the needs of their families. Two-thirds say it is not meeting the needs of most Americans.

Virtually all voters believe a great deal or some reform is needed for the country's health care system. Nine-in 10 voters say Congress should spend a lot or some time addressing needed changes to the health care system in the next two to four years – and two-thirds say they will be upset if Congress does not.

HEALTH CARE AS AN ISSUE FOR VOTERS

- 1. One-third (32%) of voters believe the current health care system is not meeting their needs and the needs of their families.** Almost one-half (48%) of voters believe the system is not meeting their needs today or that it will not meet their needs in the next three to five years.
- 2. Voters overwhelmingly believe the current health care system is not meeting the needs of other Americans.** More than two-thirds (68%) of voters believe the system is not working for most Americans. One-half (50%) of voters strongly believe this.
- 3. There is unanimous agreement that at least some reform is needed for the country's health care system.** Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the electorate say a "great deal" of reform is needed. More than one-third (37%) say "some" reform is needed. A meager 3 percent say there should be "no reform at all."

< Voters are clearly expressing their demand for change. By almost a two-to-one margin, voters say they would be more concerned that not enough would be done to change the health care system (62%) than they would that it would go too far and too many changes would be made (33%).

- < When asked which goals would be most important in reforming the health care system, making health care more affordable and providing basic coverage for everyone clearly rise to the top.

	% Most Important
Making health care more affordable	40%
Providing basic health care coverage for everyone	31%
Focusing more on prevention and diagnosis	9%
People can select doctor or hospital	8%
Maintain high quality of American health care	7%
Develop and adopt new medical technologies	3%

4. Voters rank health care as the second highest priority for Congress and the President, on par with the situation in Iraq and terrorism issues. One-fourth (26%) of voters choose health care as the first or second highest priority for Congress and the President, ranking it just below the economy and jobs (28%) and tied with Iraq (26%) and terrorism (26%).

- < Sub-groups of voters who rank health care as the highest priority for Congress and the President include working women (33%), African Americans (38%), Democrats (37%) and households with less than \$20,000 annual income (36%).
- < Voters who say the current health care system is not meeting their needs also rank it is the highest priority (38%), as do those who have had no health care coverage for the last three years (31%), and voters who have coverage now, but at some point in the last three years did not have it (33%).

5. Nine in 10 (90%) voters say Congress should address needed changes in the health care system over the next two to four years. This is in stark contrast to how much voters believe has already been done to address needed changes. Just over one-third (37%) of voters believe Congress has spent “a lot” or “some” time and effort on needed changes in the last two to four years.

- < Two-thirds (67%) of voters say they will be “very” or “somewhat” upset if Congress does not take action to address needed changes to the health care system in the next two to four years.
- < When asked in their own words to give a piece of anonymous advice to their representative in Congress, voters overwhelmingly say make health care more affordable and make it available for everyone.

6. Voters say health-related issues have greater importance to them than combating terrorism at home and improving the quality of public education.

Voters were read a series of current issues and asked to rank each one on a 10-point scale, where 10 means the issue is very important to them personally and one means it is not at all important.

- < Topping the list of importance with 79% of voters rating it “8,” “9,” or “10” on the 10-point scale is making sure seniors receive affordable prescription drug coverage. Close behind is guaranteeing all children in the U.S. have access to affordable basic health care coverage (78% rating 8-10), and more than three-fourths of voters said that guaranteeing everyone in the U.S. has access to affordable health care is important to them (77% rating 8-10).
- < These top three health care-related issues are either on par or exceed other current issues in terms of personal importance for voters:

Issue Statement Tested	% 8-10 personal importance
<i>Making sure seniors receive affordable prescription drug coverage.</i>	79%
<i>Guaranteeing all children in the U.S. have access to affordable basic health care coverage.</i>	78%
<i>Guaranteeing everyone in the U.S. has access to affordable basic health care coverage.</i>	77%
Protecting Social Security.	77%
Combating terrorism at home in the United States and overseas.	75%
Improving the quality of public education.	75%
Improving the economy and creating good paying jobs.	71%
Dealing with the situation in Iraq.	66%
Securing our borders and addressing the issue of illegal immigration.	60%

(For a complete list of the issues asked and how voters rated them, please see the Appendix.)

- < When it comes to the top issue of seniors having affordable drug coverage, voters across the ideological spectrum find common ground. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of Conservatives, and 58 percent (58%) of Liberals rate it a “10” on the importance scale.

METHODOLOGY

This national survey of 800 likely voters was conducted on behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians by Public Opinion Strategies and Lake Research Partners. The margin of error on 800 interviews is $\pm 3.5\%$. The survey was conducted September 11-13, 2006.



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APPENDIX

Voters were asked: “Now, I would like you to consider the importance of some current issues. Using a 10-point scale with 10 being VERY IMPORTANT and one being NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL, please tell me how important each issue is to you personally...Although many of these issues may be important to you, please try to rate them according to what is MOST important to you personally. You can, of course, use any number between one and 10.”

SUMMARY OF ISSUES RANKED BY % “10” IMPORTANCE

Issue Statement	% "10"	% "8-10"
<i>Making sure seniors receive affordable prescription drug coverage.*</i>	54%	79%
<i>Guaranteeing all children in the U.S. have access to affordable basic health care coverage.**</i>	53%	78%
<i>Guaranteeing everyone in the U.S. has access to affordable basic health care coverage.*</i>	53%	77%
Protecting Social Security.	51%	77%
Combating terrorism at home in the United States and overseas.	50%	75%
Improving the quality of public education.	47%	75%
<i>Making sure all Americans have access to preventative care services, such as immunizations, cancer screening, and tests for diabetes and high cholesterol.**</i>	43%	75%
Improving the economy and creating good paying jobs.	42%	71%
<i>Helping control the amount you pay out of pocket for your health care costs.*</i>	40%	70%
<i>Making sure patients can choose their own doctors.*</i>	40%	66%
Dealing with the situation in Iraq.	40%	66%
Securing our borders and addressing the issue of illegal immigration.	37%	60%
<i>Requiring Medicare and other insurers to cover the costs of coordinating the complicated medical care of people with chronic health conditions such as heart disease and diabetes.**</i>	34%	62%
<i>Helping control the out-of-pocket costs that patients pay for premiums, deductibles and co-pays.**</i>	32%	60%
<i>Making changes to the medical liability system to hold down the costs doctors have to pay for malpractice insurance.</i>	26%	51%
<i>Increasing access to online medical information and records for patients and healthcare providers. This would mean a reduction in medical errors and would also give patients information on the quality of care delivered by different physicians and hospitals.</i>	23%	48%

*Question asked of half sample A (N=400 voters)

**Question asked of half sample B (N=400 voters)